



1999

# Communications and Customer Service Conference

November 2 - 4



# TRACK 1

## Communications

W102 – Media Readiness

Mr. Bill Garber

Fleishman-Hillard

A collection of historical artifacts is arranged on a light-colored surface. In the top left, a portion of a checkered board with several pawns is visible. Below it, a red ribbon medal with a circular emblem is positioned. To the right of the red medal is a white star-shaped medal with a central emblem. Below the red medal is a blue ribbon medal with a circular emblem. In the bottom left corner, a pair of round-rimmed glasses with thin frames lies diagonally. At the very bottom left, a small circular compass is partially visible.

# What is Your Media Readiness Rating?

Bill Garber

Fleishman-Hillard

November 3, 1999



# What We'll Cover Today

- ◆ Media Readiness
- ◆ Readiness Indicators
- ◆ Readiness Test
- ◆ The Importance of Being Ready
- ◆ To Spin or not to Spin
- ◆ Action Steps

# Media Readiness

- ◆ Readiness analogy only works if you believe it's part of your mission
- ◆ Evaluates key indicators
- ◆ Yes, there is a test





# A Brief Readiness Test

- ☐ Are you deployable in a media operation?
- ☐ Got your inoculations?
- ☐ Do you have your equipment?
- ☐ Are your records in order?
- ☐ Are the troops trained?
- ☐ Have you practiced?



# Readiness Indicators

- ◆ **What is your reputation with the media?**
- ◆ **How have you been treated in the media?**
- ◆ **Do you often miss reporter's deadlines?**
- ◆ **Do you have pre-positioned fact sheets and backgrounders written in plain language?**



# More Readiness Indicators

- ☐ **Do you have a rapid response system or is responding to the media “business as usual”?**
- ☐ **Do you have walk-in access to your agency head?**



# Equipment and Tools

- ☐ **Lists**
- ☐ **Fact sheets - 1 pagers**
- ☐ **Use the power of the Internet  
- don't just create online  
books**
- ☐ **Monitor, monitor, monitor**



# Personnel

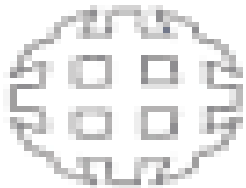
- ☐ Intelligence gathering function
- ☐ Do you have people trained to execute your communications program?
- ☐ Do you have spokespeople who will be available to the media as a priority when they are really needed?



# Training

- ☐ **Practice, practice, practice**
- ☐ **Prepare for and expect the worst**
- ☐ **Test the system - worst case scenarios**
- ☐ **Assumes you have a plan...**

# The Importance of Being Ready to Meet the Media



NEWS CORP



FOX SPORTS



SKY NEWS



FOX NETWORK

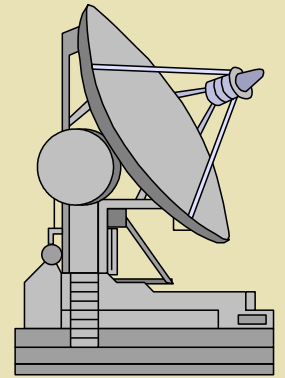




# What Makes News?

- **Sex and scandal**
- **Medical triumph & tragedy**
- **BIG money**
- **Conflict and controversy**
- **Human suffering**
- **Accidents and air crashes**

# The Nature of News



- ◆ **The group most commonly found on earth is the news crew**
- ◆ **Moves in real time**
- ◆ **The old rules about daily, weekly and monthly publications may not apply**
- ◆ **Requires pre-thinking your nightmares before they happen**



# Reasons Dumb Things Show Up in the Media

- ◆ Shooting from the hip - someone (ahem) didn't do their homework
- ◆ Complex and lengthy approval processes
- ◆ Belief you can control bad news
- ◆ Failure to plan



# Trends

- ◆ **24-hour news channels**
- ◆ **Instant web news**
- ◆ **Instant rumors**
- ◆ **Info-tainment shows**
- ◆ **The media knows before you do**
- ◆ **Spanish**



# Washington Media Universe

- ◆ **1,000 daily newspaper reps**
- ◆ **650 reps for trade pubs or periodicals**
- ◆ **600 reps of radio and TV**
- ◆ **250 photographers and cameramen**



# What Hasn't Changed

- ◆ The 3 Rs
- ◆ Relationships
- ◆ Relationships
- ◆ Relationships



# A Constructive View of Dealing with the Press

An interview is **not a game show** where you test your skill at answering questions.

It **is** an opportunity to deliver **specific messages** to specific audiences through the media.

A collection of military medals and a compass are arranged on a wooden surface. In the top left, a red ribbon medal with a star-shaped pendant is visible. Below it, a blue ribbon medal with a star-shaped pendant is shown. To the right of these, a silver star-shaped medal with a central emblem is displayed. In the bottom left corner, a circular compass with a white face and black markings is partially visible. A pair of thin, gold-rimmed glasses lies horizontally across the lower middle of the image, with its temples extending towards the right. The background is a light-colored, textured surface.

“It is better to  
have a horrible  
ending than  
horrors without  
end.”

*The Mitsubishi  
Corollary*

# The Importance of Getting on the Field



- ◆ **If you don't speak, someone will speak for you - talking heads**
- ◆ **Real time media cycle**
- ◆ **If you treat it like a normal staff action, you're destined to play catch-up ball**
- ◆ **The courtroom analogy**

A collection of vintage items is arranged on a light-colored surface. In the top left, a portion of a wooden chessboard with a checkered pattern and several chess pieces is visible. Below the chessboard, there are two medals: one with a red ribbon and a white star, and another with a blue ribbon and a white star. A small, round, silver-colored compass is located in the bottom left corner. A pair of round, gold-rimmed glasses with thin temples is positioned in the center. A small, thin, gold-colored object, possibly a pen or a small tool, lies horizontally across the middle of the image.

“Nature abhors a  
news vacuum -  
someone will  
fill it.”

A vertical strip on the left side of the slide shows various military medals and a compass rose. At the top, there are several circular medals. Below them is a blue ribbon with a silver star. Further down is a large, ornate silver cross medal with a central circular emblem. At the bottom of the strip is a circular compass rose with a needle pointing towards the top right.

**“Always tell the truth,  
its easiest to memorize.”**

*Colonel Hal Richardson, 1991*

A collection of items is arranged on a light-colored surface. In the top left, there is a checkered board with several chess pieces. Below it, a red ribbon with a star-shaped medal is visible. To the left of the red ribbon is a blue ribbon with a star-shaped medal. A pair of glasses with thin frames and a small red dot on the bridge is positioned diagonally across the lower half of the image. In the bottom left corner, there is a small, round, silver-colored compass.

**“A lie gets halfway  
around the world  
before the truth has  
a chance to get its  
pants on.”**

***Winston Churchill***



# “Spin”

- ◆ Spin has become a catch-all phrase
- ◆ Can mean inserting your point of view
- ◆ Can mean outright lying
- ◆ Can mean convenient use of facts and lawyerly debate over semantics

# The Spin-o-Meter®

Redirection  
of focus

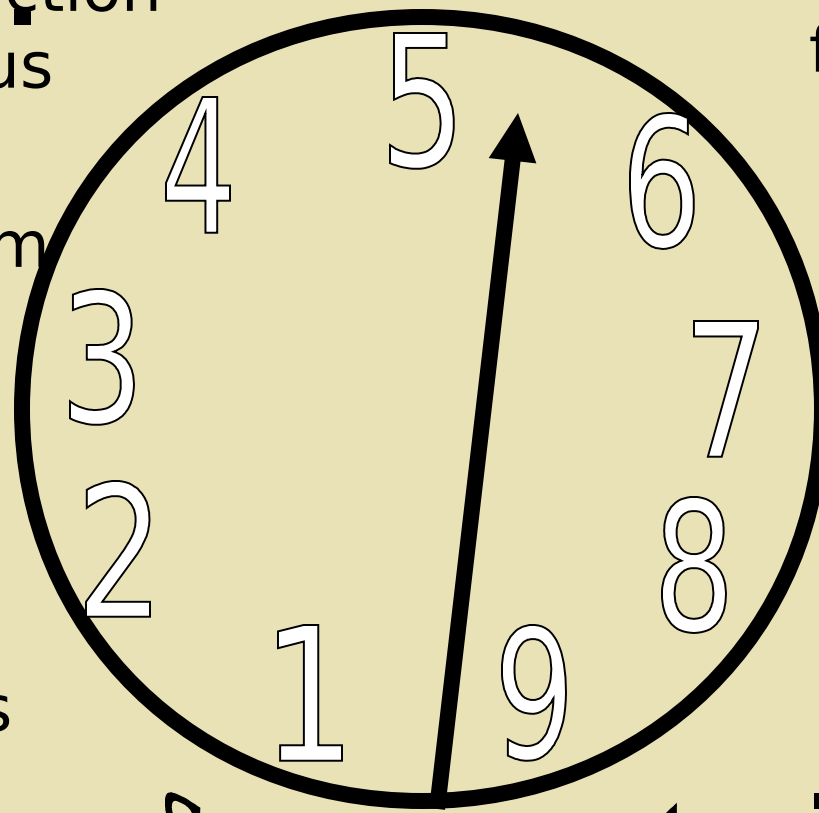
Quibbling over  
facts

Minimum  
Facts

Seriously  
elastic  
truth

Facts

Lies & B.S.



Spin-o-Meter



Ben Bradlee, Washington Post

*“The word ‘spinning’ I really hate, because it’s a nice, uptown way of saying lying.”*



# Practical Action Steps

- ◆ Get Ready!
- ◆ Start with what's always true
- ◆ Prepare for the worst, ugliest situation or issue
- ◆ Bypass the bureaucracy



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